



The Illinois Department of Corrections

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IDOC Reaches Agreement in Rasho v John Baldwin

The Illinois Department of Corrections has entered into a settlement agreement in the case of Ashoor Rasho v. John Baldwin. The judge has preliminarily approved the settlement and concluded that it is fair, reasonable, and adequate in terms of how the Department will treat offenders with mental illness. The class members will receive notice and have an opportunity to object. A full hearing will be held in May.

While the IDOC does not admit any liability regarding the allegations made in the suit, it recognizes that adequately treating offenders with mental illness will require a shift in departmental operations. The Department has already implemented significant initiatives to enhance the delivery of mental health services and continues to make improvements. Construction has already begun on Residential Treatment Units (RTUs) at Dixon, Pontiac, and Logan Correctional Centers, which will provide individualized care for offenders with serious mental illnesses. A fourth RTU is under construction at the former Illinois Youth Center in Joliet.

The Department is also committed to boosting staffing levels, adopting new policies and procedures that provide clear direction on housing and treatment plans for mentally ill offenders, and enhancing training curriculum to help staff better interact with, communicate with, and understand the needs of those who require treatment.

“Illinois prisons were not intended to be psychiatric hospitals but the reality is, they have become holding places for people who suffer from serious mental illness,” says IDOC Acting Director John Baldwin. “Our end goal is to get them stabilized and help them cope and adjust to their environment. This will improve correctional outcomes for those with mental illness and increase safety for our dedicated staff, all offenders, and the citizens we serve.”

The case has lingered in the courts since 2007 after an offender at Pontiac Correctional Center filed suit challenging the delivery of mental health services within the IDOC. The Department reached a partial agreement in 2013 but had not been able to fully implement a plan to streamline mental health services. Governor Rauner’s commitment to improving the state’s correctional system put the case on a fast track and if approved, the settlement agreement will mean improved care for all offenders who struggle with mental illness.

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Mission: To serve justice in Illinois and increase public safety by promoting positive change in offender behavior, operating successful reentry programs, and reducing victimization.

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